

Accounting Office may be detailed to the Commission without reimbursement, and such detail shall be without interruption or loss of civil service status or privilege.

(5) The Chairman of the Commission may procure temporary and intermittent services under section 3109(b) of title 5, United States Code, at rates for individuals which do not exceed the daily equivalent of the annual rate of basic pay prescribed for level V of the Executive Schedule under section 5316 of such title.

(e) SECURITY.—(1) Members and staff of the Commission, and any experts and consultants to the Commission, shall possess security clearances appropriate for their duties with the Commission under this section.

(2) The Secretary of Defense shall assume responsibility for the handling and disposition of any information relating to the national security of the United States that is received, considered, or used by the Commission under this section.

(f) TERMINATION.—The Commission shall terminate 45 days after the date on which the Commission submits its report under subsection (b).

(g) FUNDING.—(1) Of the amount appropriated by this Act, \$3,000,000 shall be available to the Commission to carry out this section.

(2) The amount made available by paragraph (1) shall remain available, without fiscal year limitation, until September 2005.

This Act may be cited as the "Military Construction Appropriations Act, 2004".

Mr. LUGAR. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote.

Mr. REID. I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate insists on its amendment and requests a conference with the House on the disagreeing votes on this measure.

The Presiding Officer appointed Mrs. HUTCHISON, Mr. BURNS, Mr. CRAIG, Mr. DEWINE, Mr. BROWNBACK, Mr. STEVENS, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mr. INOUE, Mr. JOHNSON, Ms. LANDRIEU, and Mr. BYRD conferees on the part of the Senate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. LUGAR. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that there now be a period of morning business until 12:45 with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Massachusetts.

MINIMUM WAGE

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I pay tribute to our two floor managers of a very important bill that I intend to support when we have a chance to reach it, which I hope will be done in the not too distant future. I commend our floor managers for the work they have done in bringing this legislation before the Senate.

There were two issues I had hoped we would have an opportunity to present to the Senate. One was an increase in the minimum wage. Another was working with the Senator from Oregon, Mr. SMITH, on the hate crimes issue. We are

hopeful to be able to address those during consideration of this legislation without taking a great deal of time.

I had intended to offer an amendment on the legislation now and was quite prepared to move ahead with a reasonable time period, up to an hour of time evenly divided. Then we could make a judgment with regard to hate crimes to enter into a similar kind of time agreement so that we would not delay the underlying legislation. But the problem we have is the leadership has decided we would defer action on the amendment until some future time. I regret that, but I understand it. It is the prerogative of the leadership. We will at that time have a chance to again raise this issue.

Mr. REID. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. KENNEDY. I am glad to yield.

Mr. REID. Before the Senator starts his statement, I wondered if the Senator would acknowledge that after the vote on the military construction appropriations bill, automatically recurring in the Senate is the bill that we have been working on for 1 day—1 day—the State Department authorization. The Senator understands that bill has not passed since 1985, principally because of being held up by the distinguished Senator from North Carolina, Mr. Helms. Does the Senator acknowledge that and also acknowledge the fact that we only had a few amendments left, one of which was the minimum wage, and we could have completed this bill in a couple of days? Will the Senator also acknowledge because of his offering a minimum wage amendment, they simply took the bill down, and we are not now able to offer the amendments? Will the Senator acknowledge that?

Mr. KENNEDY. The Senator from Nevada is quite correct. As our deputy leader, he has an understanding of the amendments on our side. He has correctly stated the position; that is, speaking for this side of the aisle, we are prepared to move to final passage of the legislation, but there are a few amendments, one of which is the minimum wage which, under a short time limit, can be disposed of quite rapidly. But quite frankly, we have only had 1 day of debate on the State Department authorization, and we haven't had an opportunity to raise this issue for 7 years.

I know there are those who say, let's let this issue be deferred. It has been 7 long years since we have had an increase in the minimum wage. So those individuals who are at the lower end of the economic ladder, working 40 hours a week, 52 weeks of the year, have been losing purchasing power day in and day out. We have not increased the minimum wage in 7 years.

With all due respect to other Members of this body, it is Friday at 11 o'clock. We are prepared to debate the issue and have a vote on it. People are entitled to have an indication of what the membership wants to do.

We take this issue very seriously because of the desperate situation affecting those on the lower end of the economic ladder. Quite frankly, historically this has not been a Democratic issue. It has been a bipartisan issue.

The long history of increases in the minimum wage has been basically bipartisan. It was enacted by Franklin Roosevelt in 1938; increased by Harry Truman; increased by Dwight Eisenhower in 1955 by \$1; increased by President John Kennedy in 1961 by \$2.35; increased by Lyndon Johnson; increased by a Republican, Gerry Ford; increased by Jim Carter; increased by George Bush No. 1; increased by Bill Clinton.

Republicans and Democrats have voted for an increase in the minimum wage since 1938. It has not been a partisan issue. We find in recent times that our Republican friends have been unwilling to both support it and give us the opportunity to debate the issue.

This chart shows the long history of increases in the minimum wage as well as the amounts. Even with those kinds of increases, if you look at the purchasing power of the minimum wage, as this chart indicates, it is now at perhaps its lowest level of purchasing power, \$4.95. There was one other time when it was \$4.35. It is \$4.95 and continuing to drop, and it will reach the lowest level in terms of purchasing power since even before 1962, unless we take action.

With this amendment it would increase, in terms of purchasing power, to \$6.40, which is well below what the minimum wage has been over the period of the last 40 years. So this is a very modest program. It would increase to \$6.65 in today's dollars.

I want to share with the Senate what the minimum wage is in relation to the issues of poverty in the United States. Look at this chart. Here is the poverty level. Just \$14,500 is the poverty level. The blue indicator is what has happened to the minimum wage in relation to poverty.

Most Americans believe that if people are going to work hard 40 hours a week, 52 weeks of the year, they should not live in poverty. They should not live in poverty. In the wealthiest, most successful economy in the world, this is what is happening. We find that the minimum wage workers are well below the poverty level.

As a result, every day that we delay we see minimum wage workers falling further behind. All of the gains since the 1997 increase in the minimum wage already have been lost.

What are we talking about? We are talking about an increase of \$1.50, 75 cents this year, 75 cents next year. What does that amount to? That amounts to \$3,000 over the course of a year. Translated, it means 15 months of groceries, 8 months of rent, 7 months of utilities, and the full tuition for a child of the minimum wage worker. This is what we are talking about. We are talking about groceries; we are talking